DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 166 602 CG 013 212

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TITLE Influence of Mass Media on Judgments of Physical Attractiveness: The People's Case Against Farrah Fawcett.
PUB DATE [77]
NOTE 34p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adaptation Level Theory; *Dating (Social); *Decision Making; *Interpersonal Attraction; Interpersonal Relationship; *Media Research; *Visual Perception

ABSTRACT

The way the attractiveness of an average female is rated can be significantly changed by exposing the rater to media females, even for very short periods. In one study, subjects were exposed either to a series of advertisements containing female faces or to a control series of average females. Subsequent ratings of a target female's attractiveness were significantly lower following exposure to media depicted females. In a second study, male dormitory residents watching a popular TV show whose main characters are three strikingly attractive females were asked to rate a photo of an average female (described as a potential blind date for another dorm resident). These subjects rated the target female as significantly less attractive than did a comparable control group. A third experiment was conducted to rule out alternative explanations for the effects obtained in the first two studies. Judgments of the dating desirability of an average female were again influenced by the attractiveness of prior stimuli. In addition, the third study indicated a direct effect of informational social influence on physical attractiveness judgments. The influence of the mass media had an adverse effect upon raters' judgments of an average females' physical attractiveness and her desirability as a potential date. (Author/BN)

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Influence of Mass Media on Judgments of Physical Attractiveness: The People's Case Against Farrah Fawcett

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Running head: Judgments of Physical Attractiveness

CG013212

Abstract

Three studies were conducted to test the hypothesis that judgments of average females' attractiveness and/or dating desirability will be adversely affected by exposing judges to extremely attractive prior stimuli (i.e. will show a "contrast effect"). In Study 1 subjects were exposed either to a series of advertisements containing female faces or to a control series of average females. Consistent with predictions, subsequent ratings of a target female's attractiveness were significantly lower following exposure to media depicted females. Study 2 was a field study in which male dormitory residents watching a popular TV show, whose main characters are three strikingly attractive females, were asked to rate a photo of an average female (described as a potential blind date for another dorm resident). These subjects rated the target female as significantly less attractive than did a comparable control group. A third laboratory experiment was conducted to rule out alternative explanations for the effects obtained in the first two studies. Judgments of the dating desirability of an average female were again influenced by the attractiveness of prior stimuli. In addition, the third study indicated a direct effect of informational social influence on physical attractiveness judgments. The implications concerning the effects of the mass media and peer models on judgments of "real world" females are discussed.

Influence of Mass Media on Judgments of Physical Attractiveness:

The People's Case Against Farrah Fawcett

Within the past several years, social psychologists have gathered a wealth of data attesting to the central importance of physical attractiveness in interpersonal interaction (see Berscheid & Walster, 1974, for a review). This variable has been found to have a particularly profound effect in dating situations (e.g. Berscheid, Dion, Walster, & Walster, 1971; Brislin & Lewis, 1968; Byrne, Ervin, & Lamberth, 1970; Stroebe, Insko, Thompson, & Layton, 1971; Walster, Aronson, Abrhahams, & Rottman, 1966). Brislin and Lewis (1968), for instance, found a correlation of .89 between perceived physical attractiveness and the "desire to date."

It has been noted that physical attractiveness has generally been used as an independent variable in social psychological research (Berscheid & Walster, 1974; Gross & Crofton, 1977). As Gross and Crofton (1977) put it "beauty has been conceptualized as an invariant 'cause' in previous studies" (p. 86). Nevertheless, a number of studies have shown that judgments of attractiveness can be influenced by other information likely to affect interpersonal attraction, in general, such as knowledge of a target person's attitudinal similarity (Walster, 1971; cited in Berscheid & Walster, 1974), information that s/he possesses positively valued traits (Gross & Crofton, 1976), actual acquaintance with the target person (Cavior, 1970), or association of the target person with a highly attractive other

(Meiners & Sheposh, 1977). In addition to these situational variations, judgments of physical attractiveness have been found to vary across cultural and racial groups (e.g. Cross & Cross, 1971; Marshall & Suggs, 1971), although Berscheid and Walster (1974) suggest that modern mass media may soon obscure any such differences in favor of Western standards. These authors also suggest that socialization of romantic preference is accomplished through the mass media, and that "few advertisements or popular movies and novels depict mundane levels of physical attractiveness" (p. 167). If this were the case, one would expect an inverse relationship between exposure to such mass media and the extent to which an individual's standards for the attractiveness of a romantic partner were "realistic."

In fact, if one can extrapolate the findings from research into other areas of perceptual judgment, there is reason to be concerned about even the short-term impact of mass media on our judgments of the attractiveness of the more mundane potential romantic partners around us. One consistently reported finding in perceptual judgments is a "contrast" effect, i.e. judgments of moderate stimuli in a series are found to be displaced away from extreme or distant stimuli. This effect has been found for judgments of physical dimensions such as weight (e.g. Heintz, 1950; Sherif, Taub, & Hovland, 1958), length of lines (e.g. Krantz & Campbell, 1961); and shape (Helson & Kozaki, 1968); as well as social stimuli such as attitudes (Hovland, Harvey, & Sherif, 1957), pleasantness of facial expressions

(Manis, 1971), criminal acts (Pepitone & DiNubile, 1976), and personality impressions (Simpson & Ostrum, 1976). It seems likely that such contrast effects might be found for judgments of physical attractiveness as well. Prior exposure to highly unattractive individuals would hence result in an enhanced perception of the attractiveness of an "average" person, with the reverse being true of exposure to very attractive persons. Some rather alarming implications would follow from the existence of such an effect in this realm. In our mass-media oriented culture, where we are bombarded with highly attractive females, such exposure should produce a rather high "adaptation level" (Helson, 1964), resulting in lowered assessments of the beauty of average "real world" females. Given the particularly high relationship between such judgments and dating desirability, such exposure should also lead to an analogous decrement along this dimension as well.

It should be noted that, in this case, there are at least two bodies of literature which might lead one to expect that such contrast effects would not hold in this realm. First, there is evidence that perceptual contrast will not be induced by stimuli which, although sufficiently distant from the stimulus along the relevant dimension, possess other characteristics which lead subjects to consider them to belong to different "universes of discourse" (Helson, 1971). Brown (1953), for instance, had subjects lift a tray between judgments of a series of weights. Although a similarly heavy anchor weight

produced a contrast effect, lifting the tray had no effect on judgments. Similarly, Bevan and Pritchard (1963) found that shape judgments were not affected by grossly deviant or oversized stimuli. It is thus possible that media females are not considered to belong to the same category or "universe of discourse" as real life females. Hence, their beauty might be discounted and fail to influence judgments of non-media females. Second, since physical attractiveness has been shown to have the qualities of a reinforcer (e.g. Byrne, Ervin, & Lamberth, 1971; Dion, 1976) exposure to an average female in a context of highly attractive females might be expected to lead to a classical conditioning effect such that the average female would actually come to be judged more positively. Likewise, in a context of highly unattractive females, she should come to be judged more negatively if such a process was applicable here. Study 1, then, was an attempt to determine if such a contrast effect would be found to hold for physical attractiveness judgments.

Study 1

Subjects in Study 1 rated an "average" target person after being exposed either to a series of advertisements containing a female facial photograph or to a series of yearbook photos also judged to be "average" in attractiveness.

It was predicted that exposure to media females would result in decreased ratings of the target relative to ratings made following the other average photos.

Method

Subjects. Subjects were 458 undergraduates (239 females, 219 males) enrolled in six different introductory psychology sections, all approximately equal in size (70-80 students).

Each class was divided in half and each half was exposed to a different experimental condition. Male and female subjects were distributed roughly equally in any given trial.

Stimulus materials. The experimenters obtained a list of the top ten best selling periodicals in the United States[1], located five current issues of magazines from this list, and simply chose the first advertisement in each magazine which used a female face as its main focal point[2]. The control series consisted of 5 yearbook photos from a set pre-tested during pilot work and included photos obtaining reliable mean ratings between 3.8 and 4.2 (on a 7 point scale). The target photo had been selected from this same set of "average" yearbook photos.

Procedure. According to prearrangement with each introductory psychology instructor, the experimenter entered a class at the beginning of the class period and explained that students would be participating in two separate experiments. Half of the students were asked to leave and take seats in an adjoining area while they completed an impression formation task unrelated to the present experiment. The remaining students were told that they would be participating in a task requiring absolutely independent judgments on their part and were given

a brief explanation asking them not to communicate with, or share responses with their neighbors, in any way, and to remain silent during the course of the experiment. They were then given a sheet containing a number of 7 point rating scales verbally anchored with 1="extremely unattractive", 4="average", 7="extremely attractive." Subjects were instructed to judge the photos according to how physically attractive they themselves found each face to be. To assure that experimental subjects did not misperceive the target person as a mass media female, i.e. to emphasize the different "universes of discourse", the rating scales were labelled: 1) Cover Girl Lipstick advertisement, 2) Ban Deodorant advertisment...6) High School Yearbook, etc. There were 12 scales, leading subjects to expect to rate seven advertisements and five yearbook photos. Control subjects (the other half of the class) were given a sheet containing 12 unlabelled scales. The temporal order of conditions was balanced across classes. Following completion of the task by the second group, all students returned to the class and were debriefed.

Results. Results (shown in Figure 1) were consistent with our hypotheses. Exposure to media females led to significantly lower ratings of the target person (mean = 3.25) than did exposure to the control series (mean = 3.65), $F(1, 454) = 12.29$, $p < .001$. This effect held for both male and female subjects. Neither the main effect of subjects' sex, $F(1, 454) = 2.00$, nor the interaction of subject sex and prior stimuli, $F(1, 454) < 1$, were significant.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Discussion

The results of Study 1 clearly supported our hypothesis that exposure to mass media females would result in a contrast effect for judgments of a female of average physical attractiveness. As compared to controls, subjects exposed to females depicted in advertisements from the popular media judged an average looking female as relatively unattractive. This occurred despite the fact that experimental procedures made it quite clear to subjects that the target person and the media females were from different "universes of discourse."

While the results of Study 1 are described in terms that are consistent with a perceptual "adaptation level" framework (Helson, 1964), it should be noted that contrast effects such as those found here have been discussed as due to the possible influence of non-perceptual semantic factors (e.g. Anderson, 1975; Manis, 1971; Upshaw, 1969). Such an account would suggest that contrast effects are due to altered response selection and not to perceptual shifts. For instance, subjects who were first exposed to highly attractive slides might have shifted downward in an attempt to utilize all scale categories, having already exhausted the high end of the rating scale.

According to Manis (1971), such non-perceptual shifts in response meaning are "most likely when the judge is required to use a response language that the researcher 'creates' for the experiment, for this

typically results in a langauge that is novel, arbitrary, and relativistic" (Manis, 1971, p. 239). The directions in the present experiment asked subjects to make judgments about "how physically attractive you find this person to be" along scales anchored with extraexperimentally familiar langauage. This was expected to have led our subjects to respond in terms of what they considered to be their "absolute" perceptions, but the possibility of a non-perceptual response shift by our subjects still exists nevertheless.[3]

In order to eliminate such response selection bias, and to test our hypotheses in a natural context, a second study was carried out. Subjects in Study 2 were dormitory residents who rated only one photo (of an average female) and were not exposed to the rating scale (nor expecting to do any such rating) before making this solitary judgment. One group of subjects were students who were watching the TV program "Charlie's Angels" (whose main characters are three beautiful women) while controls consisted of residents of the same dormitory (sampled during the same night) who were not watching this show at the time they were run (but were interrupted from watching earlier TV programming).

Study 2

Method

Subjects. Subjects were 81 male dormitory residents at a western university. They were run in groups of 1-6 on the evening of February 3, 1977.

Procedure. Two male confederates entered a dormitory room during one of two time periods (8:45-9:20, during the hour preceding "Charlie's Angels", or 9:45-10:20, during the hour at which "Charlie's Angels" was aired)[4]. They explained to the students in the room:

Confederate A: Listen, could I just interrupt you guys for thirty seconds, we're having a major philosophical dispute here and we need to do an informal survey to resolve the question. You see, we have a friend coming to town this week and we want to fix him up with a date, but we can't decide whether to fix him up with her or not so we decided to conduct a survey.

Confederate B: You see, I don't think she looks very good.

Confederate A: But I think she looks pretty good. At any rate, we want you to give us your vote on how attractive you think she is. (Confederate A begins to hold up the picture, but it is faced away from subjects so they can't see it).

Confederate B: Right, on a scale of one to seven, with one being very unattractive, four - exactly average, and seven being beautiful.

Confederate A: (turns over photo) Now nobody say anything until everyone makes up his own mind, and be honest - give your honest opinion.

Confederate B: Remember, one is very unattractive, four is right in the middle, and seven is very attractive.

Confederate A then held up the picture, allowed each subject to make a silent judgment, and then had the subjects give their responses. They thanked the subjects, left the room, and immediately recorded the time, condition, and each subject's response.[5]

Subjects were broken down into four groups - those watching "Charlie's Angels" constituted the "experimental" group, while those watching another TV program earlier in the night were designated as control subjects. To control for the possibility that ratings by experimental subjects may have been due simply to their having been made at a later hour, two additional control groups were included. Subjects in these groups were not watching TV, but were sampled either during the "Charlie's Angels" time slot or the preceding hour. The data were thus analyzed according to a 2 x 2 design. One factor was whether or not subjects were viewing television at the time they were run (factor V) and the other was the time slot (T, Charlie's Angels[6] versus the previous hour). It was predicted that the results would show a V x T interaction indicating relatively lower ratings by viewers of Charlie's Angels compared with viewers of earlier programming, with no analogous effect for non-viewers during the early and late time slots.

Results

Results of Study 2 were in line with predictions. Neither factor T nor factor V alone yielded significant effects (both F values < 1). The interaction, however, was significant, indicating relatively lowest

ratings by viewers of Charlie's Angels $F(1, 77) = 7.28$, $p < .01$. As predicted, the simple main effect for TV viewers was significant, 3.49 vs. 4.12, t (40) = 4.18, $p < .001$. Results are displayed in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Since Charlie's Angels viewers were sampled later in the evening, it was possible that their lower ratings may have simply been a function of the time factor - that is, these subjects may have been more tired, irritable, and so on. A comparison of the mean ratings by the non-TV viewers, however, indicates that the time factor did not have such an effect. In fact, from the pattern of means observed, the time factor could only be seen as operating against our predictions.

Data were also analyzed using the group mean as the unit of analysis. Results were essentially the same using this method of analysis. Once again, neither main effect was significant (both Fs were less than 1), while the interaction remained significant, $F(1, 24) = 5.91$, $p < .02$ as did the simple main effect for TV viewers, $t(13) = 2.13$, $p < .05$. It was also possible to include group size as a dependent variable in this analysis on the chance that there might have been a systematic relationship between this variable and our independent variables. Neither main effect nor the interaction were significant for this variable. The correlation between group size and the rating of the girl was also non-significant, $r = .03$.

Discussion

The results of Study 2 combine with those of Study 1 in supporting the existence of an adverse effect of media females upon judgments of average females' attractiveness. Study 2 occurred outside a laboratory setting and involved ratings of only one girl. The results argue strongly for the "real world" relevance of the phenomenon, while arguing against the likelihood of semantic factors as an explanation for our results. Since subjects in Study 2 only made one rating, it seems implausible to suggest that their ratings were mediated by factors such as a desire to utilize all categories or to balance earlier exhuastion of the high end of the scale. Subjects were asked to make a rating which in fact had potential behavioral implications, and presumably was to influence whether or not the target person would have a date arranged for her or not.

While the results of Study 2 cannot be explained as due to the effects of response-selection, however, a potential problem arises from the fact that subjects were not randomly assigned to conditions. It could be argued that the population who was watching Charlie's Angels was different from the other subjects on some other dimension, which led to lowered ratings of the target person (i.e. perhaps they had generally negative attitudes about or higher standards for women). A third study was conducted, therefore, to attempt to demonstrate a contrast effect in a setting which involved random assignment of subjects to conditions, while at the same time eliminating the possible

alternative explanation of the first experiment as due to altered use of the response scale. In Study 3, therefore, subjects did not use the same response language to rate the target person and the prior stimuli. While the prior stimuli were rated on a 9 point semantic differential scale (physically unattractive - physically attractive), the "dating desirability" of the target person was assessed on a checklist type rating sheet (arranged horizontally and with a reversed polarity).

In addition to investigating these indirect influences on judgments of physical attractiveness, the third study also investigated the more direct impact of "informational social influence" (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Half the subjects were exposed to peer models who made either derogatory or laudatory comments about several of the females. It was expected that information about peers' evaluations would have a strong impact, serving to influence subjects' judgments in the direction of such evaluations.

Study 3

Method

Subjects. Subjects were 98 undergraduates enrolled in introductory psychology at a western state university who were run in groups of 2-7. One subject was deleted because of suspicion regarding the male confederates.

Procedure

Subjects arrived for an experiment entitled "Pre-testing stimuli" and were led to a small room containing several chairs and a slide

projector. In half the conditions, two male confederates posed as subjects and always sat together in the back row (of two rows of five chairs). The experimenter explained:

> As the sign up sheets indicated, we're interested in having you help us pre-test some stimuli for an experiment we'll be running at the start of next semester. What that experiment will involve is seeing how well people judge personality from only a small amount of information. We'll be showing people a photograph including only a person's face and asking them to judge the person's overall personality. We've found in the past, however, that these judgments are often influenced by other irrelevant factors, so we'll be asking you to make an objective judgment of several photographs so we can control for these irrelevant factors next semester. Alright, for the first six photographs you'll be rating the physical attractiveness of each face.

Subjects were then given a sheet containing six 9 point scales labelled 1 = "extremely unattractive" and 9 = "extremely attractive." They were further instructed to carefully observe each slide for forty seconds, at which point a blank screen would appear which would signal them to make their judgment. For all subjects slides 2, 3 and 5 were identical. These slides showed females previously judged to be "average" in attractiveness. Half the subjects saw highly attractive slides in slots 1, 4 and 6, while the other half saw

unattractive slides in these positions. In addition, half of each group heard the confederates make comments about the third and fifth slides. These comments were negative in the groups exposed to the high-attractive series, and positive in the groups exposed to the low-attractive series. After slide 5 was rated, the experimenter mentioned that any comments might influence the others in the room, and asked that the subjects refrain from giving any public responses to the stimuli (for controls, this request was made before slide 1 was shown).

After slide 6 was rated subjects were told that the next slide would be "evaluated on a completely different dimension" and were handed a sheet which asked them to check one of seven sentences, ranging from "I would find this person extremely desirable as a date" to "I would find this person extremely undesirable as a date." Female subjects were instructed to evaluate the female as a potential date for a male friend. Subjects were then fully debriefed, and probed for suspicion. All reported having clearly heard the confederates' comments (when any were made), and most generally reported in informal discussion that they found them obnoxious and did not feel they were influenced. Nevertheless, as might be expected, other males had in several cases spontaneously joined in verbal agreement with the confederates' comments during the experimental session. Data was therefore treated using the group as the unit of analysis.

Design

The design was a 2 (prior stimuli: attractive vs. unattractive) x 2 (presence vs. absence of confederates). Sex of subjects had also been included in the analysis and was found to have neither a direct nor interactive impact on the dependent variables.

Predictions

1) It was expected that attractive prior stimuli would lead to decreased ratings of the target persons' desirability.

2) It further was expected that subjects' ratings of the physical attractiveness of slides 3 and 5 would be affected in the direction of the confederates' comments.

3) In addition, we were interested in seeing whether confederates' comments would indirectly enhance the influence of the prior stimuli, by further heightening standards in the attractive condition, and vice versa.

Results

Ratings of the target person's "dating desirability" showed the predicted main effect of prior stimuli (P), $F(1, 14) = 15.01$, $p < .002$. As expected, subjects exposed to the attractive prior slides gave significantly lowered ratings of the target person (see Table 2). Since the confederates' comments were opposite depending upon the prior stimuli a significant interaction of prior stimuli and confederates' comments (C) would have indicated that the comments further enhanced the standards set by the prior stimuli. The F for the

interaction term was less than 1, thus failing to support this suggestion. The C "main effect" was also non-significant, F (1, 14) = 1.51.

Insert Table 2 about here

On the slides for which confederates made direct comments, ratings were, as predicted, lowered in the attractive condition (where negative comments were made) and enhanced in the unattractive condition (where positive comments were made). This showed up as a significant P x C interaction term on slide 5, $F(1, 14) = 4.66$, $p < .05$, and a marginally significant effect on slide 3, $F(1, 14) = 4.41$, $p < .06$. In addition, there was a significant main effect of prior stimuli on slide 5, $F(1,14) = 25.5$, $p < .001$, as well as a similar trend on slide 3, $F(1,14) = 3.91$, $p < .07$. Since confederates' comments should have cancelled out for the C effect, F's were, not surprisingly, less than 1 for ratings of both slide 3 and slide 5.

General Discussion

The results of Study 3 were consistent with those of the first two studies in supporting the existence of a contrast effect phenomenon for judgments of physical attractiveness. In this case, the results cannot be explained as due to biased response-scale usage or to self-selection of subjects. The former argument is further weakened by the fact that confederates' statements had a significant impact on subjects' use of the first rating scale, without any corresponding

effect on judgments of dating desirability. The results of all three studies, when taken in combination, support the suggestion that exposure to highly attractive females will result in an adverse effect upon the judgments of an average female's physical attractiveness, and correspondingly, her desirability as a potential date. These findings are consistent with earlier mentioned research which indicates that judgments of physical attractiveness seem to carry the major portion of the variance in determining the desirability of a potential date. For instance, Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, and Rottman (1966) found that males' judgments of a female's attractiveness correlated .79 with their desire to date her, thus accounting for 62% of the variance. Likewise, Brislin and Lewis' (1968) reported correlation of .89 between the same two variables accounting for fully 79% of the variance in this case.

The present results indicate that our initial impressions of potential romantic partners will thus be adversely affected if we happen to have recently been exposed to posters, magazines, television or movies containing highly attractive individuals (or if such stimuli are concurrently present). Whether or not such effects are long-lasting cannot be determined from the present series of studies. Even if such effects are very short-lived, however, they would still be of great consequence. Indeed, during the past year the average American would have been hard-put to avoid Farrah Fawcett[7] alone. She has appeared on the cover of so many periodicals that

one magazine mockingly ran a cover containing her face and the caption "This magazine contains absolutely nothing about Farrah Fawcett."[8] She has recently appeared in at least six major advertising campaigns, as a star of a highly popular television program, a guest on many others, and on a poster selling at a rate of over one million a month! This is only one example, of course. As indicated in Experiment 1, females who appear in advertisements in best-selling magazines are generally drawn from the upper end of the distribution of physical attractiveness (and such females are used regularly in advertising, regardless of the nature of the product being sold).

It might be expected that individuals exposed to relatively more mass media or media containing relatively more photographic depictions of attractive females would be particularly negative in their judgments of statistically normal females. Readers of Cosmopolitan, Vogue, Playboy or even the Sunday Times Supplement might indeed judge the majority of the female population as being below average in physical attractiveness, and hence less than desirable as dates or sexual partners. In the studies reported here a very short period of exposure to media families resulted in an average female's being rated as significantly below average in attractiveness. The accumulated effect of long-term exposure to the media might thus be expected to be quite detrimental to the average female, and further research to determine if such long-term individual differences exist might well be worthwhile.

In addition to demonstrating indirect contextual influences on judgments of attractiveness, the results of the third study indicated that information regarding peer judgments will influence evaluations of physical beauty. Subjects' judgments tended to conform to evaluative comments expressed by the confederates in this study. These results are consistent with classical findings that suggest that individuals use peers' judgments as a source of evidence about objective reality (Asch, 1956; Crutchfield, 1955; Sherif, 1937). Since subjects judgments were private in this case, these results would seem to be an instance of what Deutsch and Gerard (1955) have referred to as "informational" as opposed to "normative" social influence.

The situation subjects faced in this final experiment also has clear "real-life" anologues. It has been noted that initial pre-interaction encounters are strongly influenced by visual characteristics (Levinger, 1974), and very often such first visual encounters are accompanied by friends' explicit evaluations of the target individual's attractiveness. Interestingly, males in this society seem to use a ten-point scale, not unlike those used in the present experiment, in making such evaluations. At the university where the first in the present series of investigations was carried out, in fact, this is sometimes done in a rather inhumanely explicity manner on the main campus wall. Members of campus fraternities have on several occasions used large signs (numbered 1 to 10) which are held in the air as a female passes. More typically, this is done on a

regular but somewhat more discreet basis by both male and female members of the same university community. In addition, students can often be observed to actively seek peer evaluations of the attractiveness of potential romantic partners with whom relationships have progressed to the level of "surface contact" (Levinger, 1974).

The results of Study 3 showed only a direct effect of confederates' comments on physical attractiveness judgments while general "standards" for dating desirability were not influenced by these comments. It is potentially possible that long-term exposure to peers with either very high or very low "standards" would result in a more general effect, but the present methodology (in which only two females were evaluated by the peer models) does not allow for any such determination.

The present series of studies used only female target persons. Although physical attractiveness has generally been found to be more important for females than for males (e.g. Berscheid et al., 1971; Efran, 1974; Stroebe et al., 1971; Walster et al., 1966) attractiveness has not been found to be insignificant for men, by any means. These same studies, for instance, have shown physical attractiveness to be significant in importance for males as well, and Berscheid and Walster (1974) point out that although females consistently report physical attractiveness to be less important in their judgments of males, the findings with regard to behavioral measures are sometimes contradictory (e.g. Byrne et al., 1970). It seems entirely possible that the present

findings would have similar implications for judgments of males, although this remains to be empirically verified.

Footnotes

[1]Source: Circulation figures. Information Please Alamanac. New York: MacMillan, 1976.

[2]Advertisements used were Ban Roll-on-Reader's Digest, May 1976; Winston-TV Guide, July 17, 1976; Clairol hair coloring-Woman's Day, August, 1976; Cover Girl make-up-Redbook, August, 1976; and Ray-Ban sunglasses-Playboy, July, 1976. The experimenters simply used the first 5 magazines from the best-selling list which they found either around their houses or on the stand of a local convenience store. No other selectivity was exercised in choosing these particular magazines.

[3]With regard to applied consequences, such an account would not necessarily be incompatible with our basic notion; i.e. that exposure to highly attractive media individuals will lead to decreases in the judged attractiveness of average "real world" individuals. The "response-bias" position would make identical predictions, in fact, to the extent that individuals make explicit comparisons between the attractiveness of media individuals and those around them. The "perceptual" position, however, is that no explicit comparisons are necessary for a contrast effect to occur.

[4]The original time slot for the show was 9:00-10:00, and the confederates had been instructed not to begin running subjects until after 9:15, when the show had gotten well underway. Because of a Presidential address to the nation, however, the show was moved back one half hour. This led to some time confusion for the confederates,

and one group of subjects was run after being exposed to approximately three minutes of the program (during which time the beautiful stars had not entered the plot; two male hoodlums had been shown burning down a movie production studio). Data from this group could not be meaningfully included in either the control or experimental conditions, and was discarded. One other group, tuned to "Charlie's Angels" (halfway through the show), also failed to provide meaningful data, although their behavior fits well with the present hypothesis. Subjects in this latter group refused to give numerical ratings of the girl, but made derogatory statements such as "I don't rate in negative numbers". "If we give her 7 free points, she's still a 0", and "Get her out of here!" All subjects in other groups were cooperative in making silent independent judgments.

[5]Given the short delay between observation and recording of responses, no problems occurred with this method. Agreement between the two confedeartes was 100% in all instances.

[6]All subjects who were watching television during this time slot were tuned to this program, which was quite popular at the time this study was run (#6 in the Nielsen ratings).

[7]One of the stars of "Charlie's Angerls" at the time Study 2 was run. She has since been replaced by another unusually beautiful starlet.

[8]"New Times", June 10, 1977.

Table 1

Ratings of Target Person's Attractiveness

Study 2

	TV Viewing	
Time Slot	Yes	No
"Charlie's Angels"[a]	3.43	4.31
Previous hour	4.08	3.87

Note: higher scores indicate more positive ratings

[a]All TV viewing subjects sampled during this time slot were tuned to Charlie's Angels.

Table 2

Influence of Stimulus Attractivenss and Confederate Comments on Ratings of Prior Stimuli and Target Person

Study 3

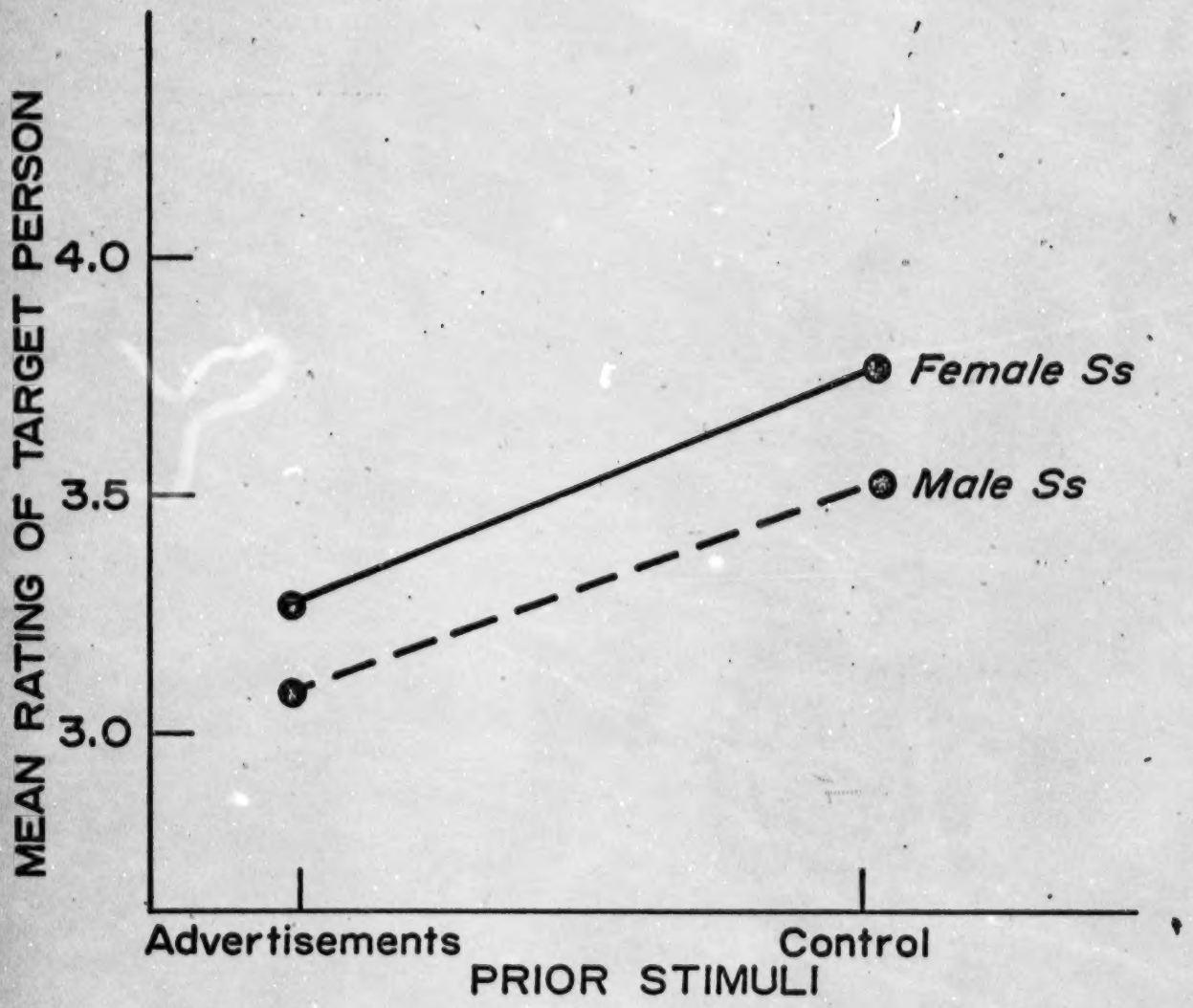
	Attractiveness of Prior Stimuli			
	Attractive		Unattractive	
Rating of:	Confederates Comment	Control	Confederates Comment	Control
Slide 3[1]	4.63	5.08	6.04	5.00
Slide 5[1]	4.30	5.02	6.96	6.08
Target[2] Person	4.33	4.16	3.34	2.78

[1]Higher ratings indicate more positive ratings of female's beauty on a 9 point scale.

[2]Higher ratings indicate less desirability as a date on a 7 point scale.

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Ratings of the target person as a function of subjects' sex and type of prior stimuli: Study 1.


MEAN RATING OF TARGET PERSON
4.0
3.5
3.0
Female Ss
Male Ss
Advertisements
Control
PRIOR STIMULI

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